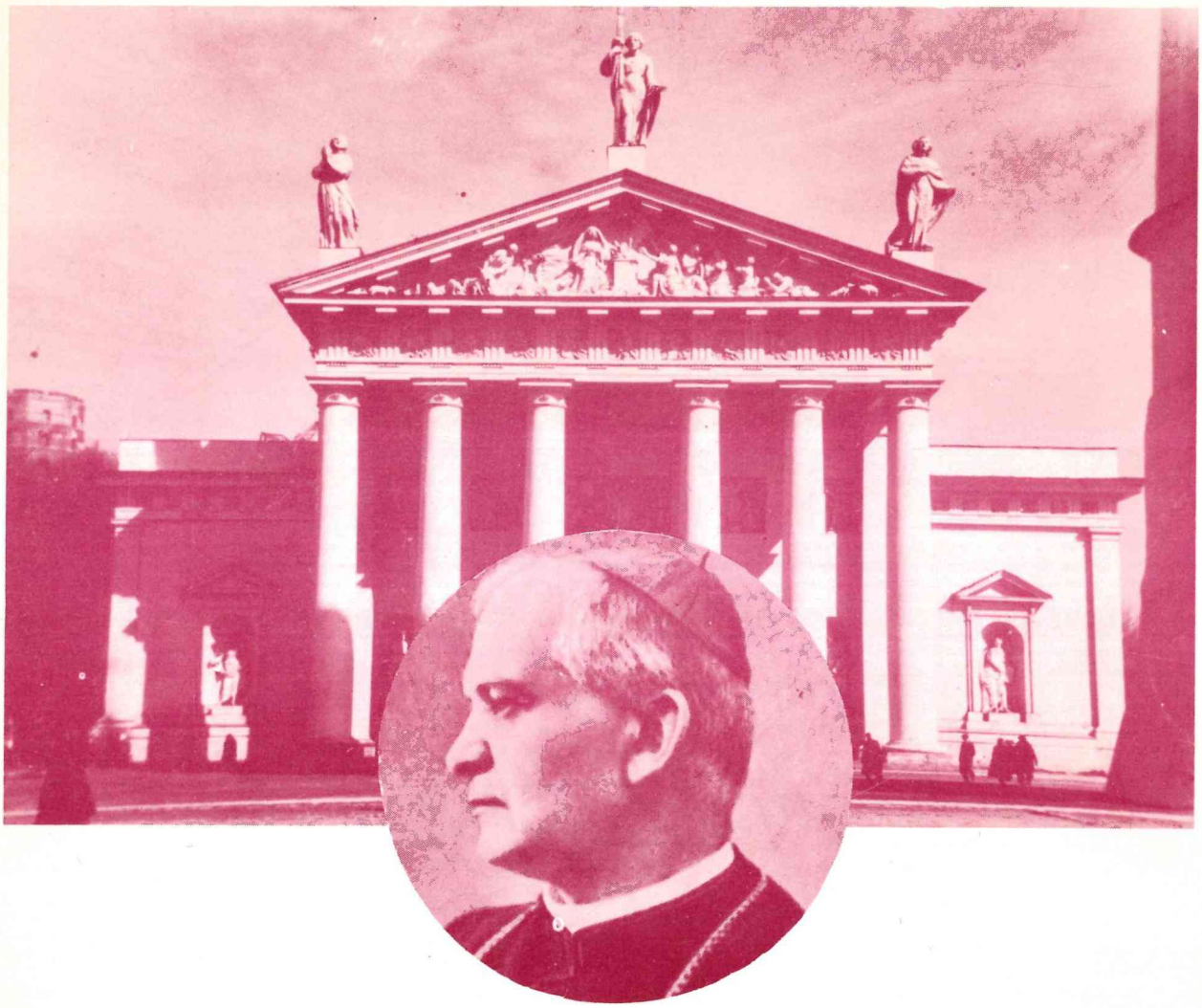
THE PROVIDENTIAL PATH



Venerable Servant of God
Archbishop George Matulaitis

1871 — 1927

THE PROVIDENTIAL PATH

A GLANCE INTO THE LIFE OF THE VENERABLE
SERVANT OF GOD ARCHBISHOP
GEORGE MATULAITIS

1986

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Cover — Vilnius Cathedral, now converted to art gallery

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I kiss the hand of your Providence,
I entrust myself fully and completely
to your guidance. Heavenly Father, do with me
as you will.

It pleases you, O Lord, to lead me along wondrous
ways. But who can know your paths and plans?
Behold your servant! send me where you will!
Like a child I fly to your embrace: carry me.

It pleases you to lead me along a road
beset by adversities, obstacles and difficulties;
for this I thank you, I thank you very much.
I believe that as I travel this road I will not
easily lose my way because it is the road
taken by my beloved Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Diary—1911

HIS CHILDHOOD

It was in the parish of Marijampolė, in the small village of Lūginė that George Matulaitis was born on April 13, 1871, in the aftermath of the cruel suppression imposed by the Russians after the uprising of 1863. Those were difficult times for Lithuania, which saw its faith and its religious feelings offended and mocked by the invader, who menacingly tried all means to force it into the vortex of schism.

George, the youngest and the pride of eight children, was baptized by Rev. George Čėsna, then in charge of the church of St. Michael, and at that time the Superior General of the Marian Order which was then on the brink of extinction.

His parents, Andrew and Ursula, were of the most authentic type of Lithuanian peasants; simple, attached to their family, fields and religious beliefs.

Two severe blows darkened little George's childhood: when he was three, his father died, and when he was ten, he lost his mother. Only one who has last both parents at an early age can feel the full effects of being an orphan. Thus, God's ways are impossible to analyze: perhaps in this way, He intended to prepare George for the work and hardships of later life.

Archbishop George Matulaitis' home.

The room where he was born.

Marijampolė's church in which Archbishop George Matulaitis was baptized.

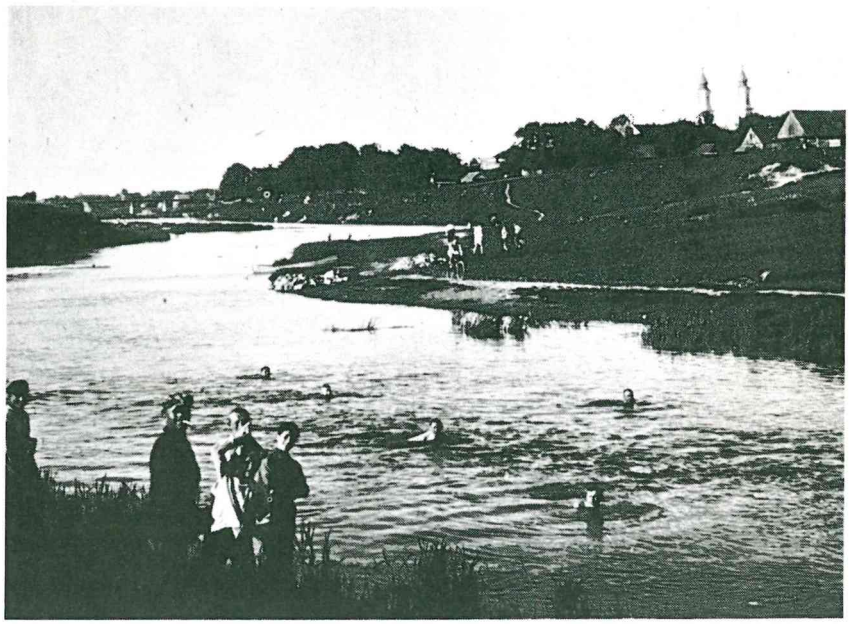
HIS YOUTH

Little George knew the hardships of being raised on a farm. Orphaned early in his childhood, he found himself under the care of his eldest brother who, while understanding him little, allowed him nonetheless to attend the elementary school (1879) at Marijampolė, from which he later passed to the Gymnasium (a secondary school preparing for the university).

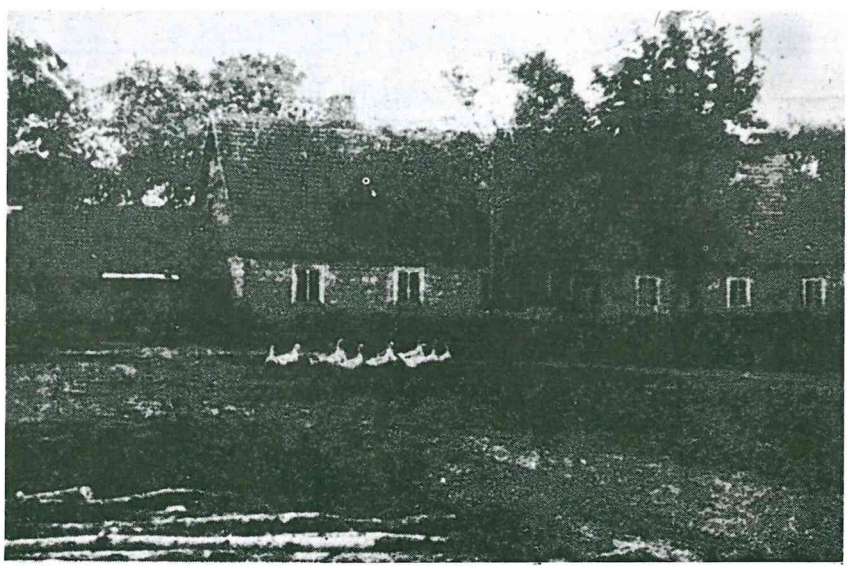
It was 5 kilometers from home to Marijampolė where he went to school, and was a severe hardship for such a small child to travel this distance daily.

The burden of studies soon proved itself too heavy for a boy with a frail physical constitution, due to an illness which was to stay with him all his life. He was forced to interrupt his studies and return to the farm in Lūginė, where he was visited a few years later, in 1889, by a cousin of his, John Matulaitis, professor of the Gymnasium at Kielce in Poland. George talked with him and revealed his great disappointment in having to leave school. His cousin listened sympathetically, encouraged him and gave him the opportunity of continuing his interrupted dream: of studying and responding to a vocation which was already germinating.

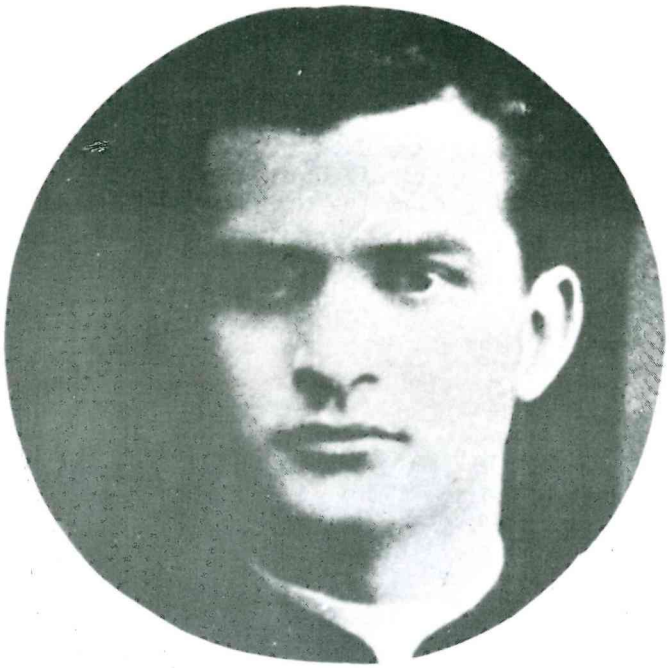
Losing no time, he left that same year for Poland, where he had to change his family name Matulaitis to the Polish Matulewicz, as prudence and circumstances dictated in those days.



The Šešupė River at Marijampolė.



The yard and house where little George ran and played.



The student seminarian.

The young priest.

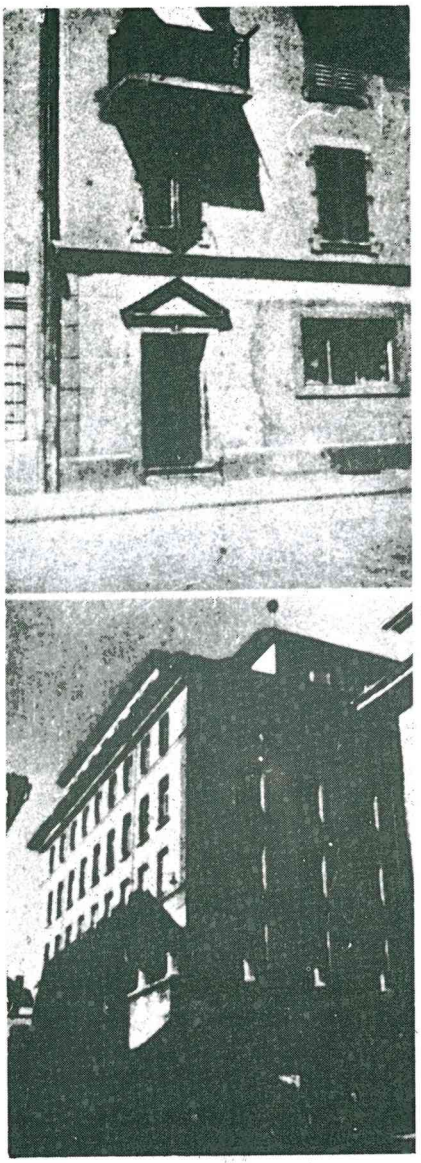
PREPARATION FOR THE PRIESTHOOD

After the Gymnasium at Kielce, he studied in its Seminary until the latter was closed by the czarist authorities in 1893, when the students were scattered among other seminaries. George Matulaitis was assigned to the seminary in Warsaw where, with a select group, he was able not only to continue higher studies, but, above all, to develop his character and personality to such an extent that Henry Przezdziecki, a fellow student, later gave this sketch of him: "From the start of our living together, we became aware of his acute mind, his extraordinary genius and the excellence of his character. He soon took first place among us. Tranquil, diligent, affable, burning with love for God, he drew our hearts to himself."

Having brilliantly concluded his studies in Warsaw, he was sent to the Catholic Ecclesiastical Academy of St. Petersburg, the only institute for higher studies, the meeting place for the best ecclesiastical students from all Russia, who were destined to become professors and bishops and keep high the name of Rome in the vast regions of the empire.

At the end of four years (1899), George completed his course with a double crown: the catholic priesthood (1898), and the degree of Master in Theology conferred on him with the highest distinction possible, "Summa cum laude, cum nota primus."

Father George, 37 years of age.



The University of Friburg in Switzerland.

SPIRITUAL AND MENTAL MATURITY

Just when he seemed ready and anxious to begin his pastoral career with such exceptional spiritual and intellectual promise, his illness, not yet completely diagnosed, again took hold of him. He tried the baths, going to Kreuznach in Germany, and seemed to benefit from them.

On the advice of his friends, he went from Germany to Fribourg (Switzerland), and there, despite a serious surgical operation for tuberculosis of the bones, he obtained his doctorate in Theology (1902), submitting a dissertation on "The Doctrine of the Russians on the State of Original Justice."

This was a very exacting theme, and perhaps one which foretold the apostolate of Matulaitis. A year later, it was published in Cracow and given a favorable review in the "Civiltà Cattolica."

With his poor health, but with a serene and optimistic heart, Matulaitis returned to Kielce, ready to work in God's ample vineyard.

Matulaitis' friend since his student days, Francis Būčys, who later became bishop, wrote: "Matulaitis knew of the high opinion that his friends and professors had of him, yet, he remained simple, gentle and modest, without a trace of guile or deceit."

The human mind is the source of all kinds of ideas
which, once grasped by the masses,
diffuse throughout the wide world
and begin to hold sway over mankind.

The human will is that force
which can bestow happiness
or misfortune on mankind.
It can assemble and unite other men about itself,
push them forward or backward,
lead them, elevate or degrade them,
and rule them.

The human heart,
full of fiery feelings as it is,
can be an energy that warms, enkindles
and inflames others like steam and electricity;
it can attract and excite toward good deeds,
or it can become a baneful element,
capable of destroying everything.

It is, therefore, important to train a man
properly in the spirit of Christ,
to enlighten his intellect solidly with the whole truth;
to confirm his will in God's will,
which is expressed through the Commandments,
counsels, duty, vocation, inspiration, environment,
by strengthening all his ties with God, with the grace,
which our Mother the Church provides for us
through the sacraments and other means,
and God Himself bestows on us so abundantly;
and to enkindle in his heart an ardent love for God and
neighbor.

Diary—1910

Let us try to recognize our times,
understand and sympathize with
the people of our times, with their desires,
longings, endeavors, and purposes.
Let us be in agreement with every good thought,
let us praise every good idea,
let every good work find sustenance and praise,
let every problem and hardship
find sympathy and help.

The mind guides the will of man.
The mind in erring, causes the will to err.
The mind makes inroads in all our lives.
If thoughts fail, become murky, entwine themselves,
then all of life begins to die out.
I wonder if our greatest disaster isn't
the mind's straying from truth,
from the path of faith?

Diary—1911

RENOVATOR

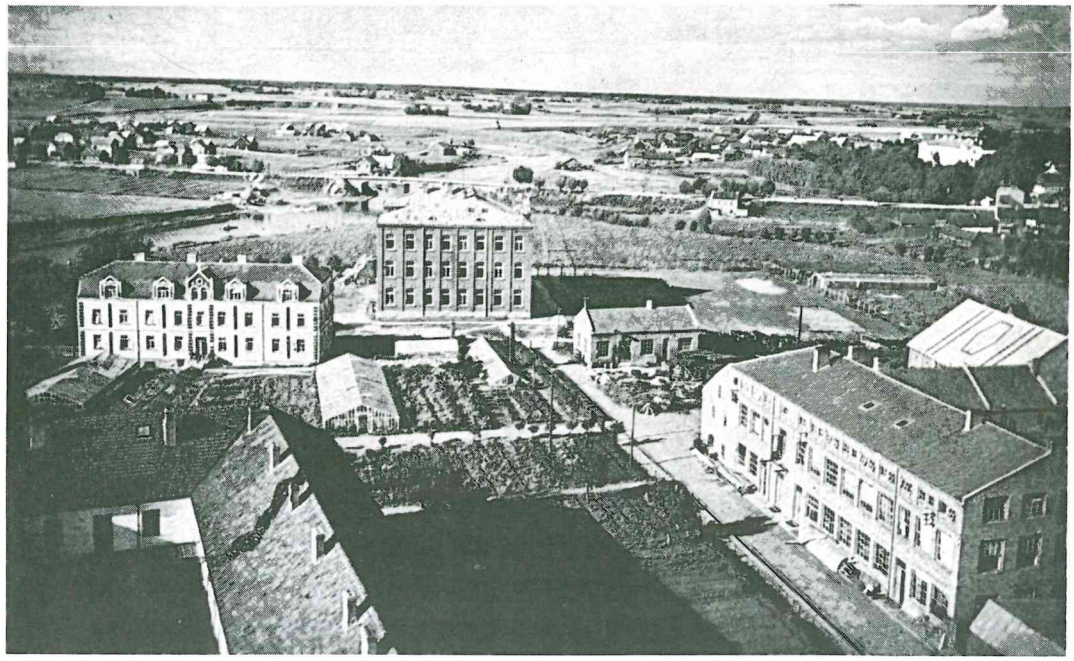
The picture which Russia offered at the end of the 19th century was, from a religious point of view, most disturbing to the heart of Matulaitis. An appalling statistic of the period was that in the vast territory there were only eight monasteries for men religious, and sixteen convents for nuns. All were destined to extinction. They were absolutely prohibited to accept novices or to receive any assistance from the outside.

For five years Matulaitis was a professor at the Ecclesiastical Academy of St. Petersburg. He first taught sociology there. His lectures inspired the students through his gentle expressiveness and by raising contemporary issues.

In 1909, he was appointed the Academy's Inspector. He stepped down from this high post in 1911. Everyone was stunned that Matulaitis would resign his professor's and inspector's posts, but as Father Francis Būčys tells it, this was because they didn't know that he was sacrificing his professorial career for the sake of the affairs of the Marian Congregation.

The Marian Congregation was the most beloved of Matulaitis' dreams, in which, according to Father Francis Būčys, he saw his life's work. In 1909, while still in the Academy of St. Petersburg, Matulaitis traveled to Marijampolė with an idea: the Marian Congregation must be secretly restored (the Russian Government was not permitting monasteries to accept new candidates).To old Father Senkus, the last Marian Superior General, this idea seemed almost heavensent, according to Professor J. Totoraitis, one of the first new members after the Congregation was restored.

The old Marian Order, founded by the Servant of God, Stanislaus Papczynski, under the title of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, contributed greatly to the spreading and strengthening of the faith both in Poland and Lithuania, especially among the rural population.



The Marian Fathers monastery in Marijampolė.

The Marian Fathers General Chapter, assembled in Rome in 1939. Bishop Francis Būčys, elected Superior General, seated in the center of the first row.

SERVICE TO GOD

One after another, we must break the bonds
that keep our souls attached to selfishness.
We must break and destroy those bonds,
that lock us to earthly things.

We must devote ourselves to seeking God
in everything we do and attempt to please Him.
He wakes us, that we may awake from
spiritual slumber.
He often urges us to work for His glory.

Lord, let it be that after I deny myself,
I may immerse myself into You and Your Holy Will.
Let prayer, the Lord's work, and hardship
with suffering for the Church
comprise my entire life.

Diary—1910

AND TO YOUR NEIGHBOR

Let our example be Jesus Christ,
not only peacefully at work
in the Nazareth household,
not only Christ fasting in the desert,
not only spending the night in prayer,
but also Christ toiling, crying, suffering;
Christ among the people,
Christ visiting the countryside,
in cities, visiting sinners and the wayward
as well as the educated.

Wherever we will be: in prison, in exile,
let us strive to proclaim Christ.
Life is uncertain;
We know not what sufferings and persecutions
for Christ's sake may come our way.
We have to be prepared for everything.

Even though each of us
is best suited
to work within his own nation,
we must embrace,
with a truly catholic heart,
all of catholicism and the whole world.

Diary—1911

THE CROSS OF THE BISHOP

In 1918 Msgr. Achilles Ratti was the Papal Nuncio in Warsaw, who later became Pope Pius XI. At the same time Father George Matulaitis was establishing on firm foundations the first Marian House in the Warsaw suburb of Bielany. The future pope took a liking to this Marian family, visiting it often. Of Matulaitis he was wont to say, even up to a few months before his death in 1939, that "he was truly a man of God."

Toward the end of 1918, while immersed in plans and labors for the newly restored, fledgling Congregation, he received the news of his appointment as Bishop of Vilnius. Although ever prompt to do God's will, nevertheless he did not hesitate to make known to Rome the sincere and valid reasons for his reluctance to accept the Episcopal See of Vilnius, pointing out the difficulties which would inevitably arise from his appointment, especially the friction among various nationalities. He also humbly hinted at his tender solicitude for the Marian Congregation, a creature of his heart, which was still in great need of his personal attention. All to no avail. He was consecrated bishop December 1, 1918 and on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception took possession of his diocese.

"In the example of Christ," he promised on the occasion of his formal installation, "I will try to embrace everyone, to be everything to everyone. I am prepared to suffer death for the sake of truth. To you I wish to be in imitation of Christ only a father and a shepherd. My field of work is the kingdom of Christ, the Church militant; my lot is Christ."

God's shepherd adhered to this program with heroic fidelity seven years, notwithstanding all kinds of opposition: persecutions, threats of arrest and death, unjust attacks in the press, provocations, undue interference, even attempts to get rid of the bishop through diplomatic channels.

Father George Matulaitis in the Warsaw suburb of Bielany, where the Marians directed an orphanage serving 200 children.

EXCERPT FROM HIS INAUGURAL SERMON, December 8, 1918

I will concern myself with being a father and a friend. I will be a friend to little children, that they may study to know God, prayer, obedience, order. I will protect their innocence, I will protect them from sins and temptations, I will be a friend to the needy and the unhappy. I will console the poor, urging the wealthy to share with them. I will not turn anyone away. Living in peace with everyone, I will see to it that love reigns, and that there wouldn't be hatred or exploitation. I wish to be forgiving to the wicked, a support to the weak, and a shelter to the good.

Great tasks await me. I will dedicate my best efforts and health to complete them. Like Christ, I will try to help everyone, be everything to everyone. The object of my activity will be the promotion of Christ's kingdom (the Church militant) My party—Christ. I believe that God's favor will rest with me and will direct my steps properly.

Vilnius Cathedral.

The main altar of the Kaunas Cathedral where George Matulaitis was consecrated bishop, December 1, 1918.

Bishop Francis Karevičius, who consecrated George Matulaitis.

SEVEN YEARS IN HIS DIOCESE

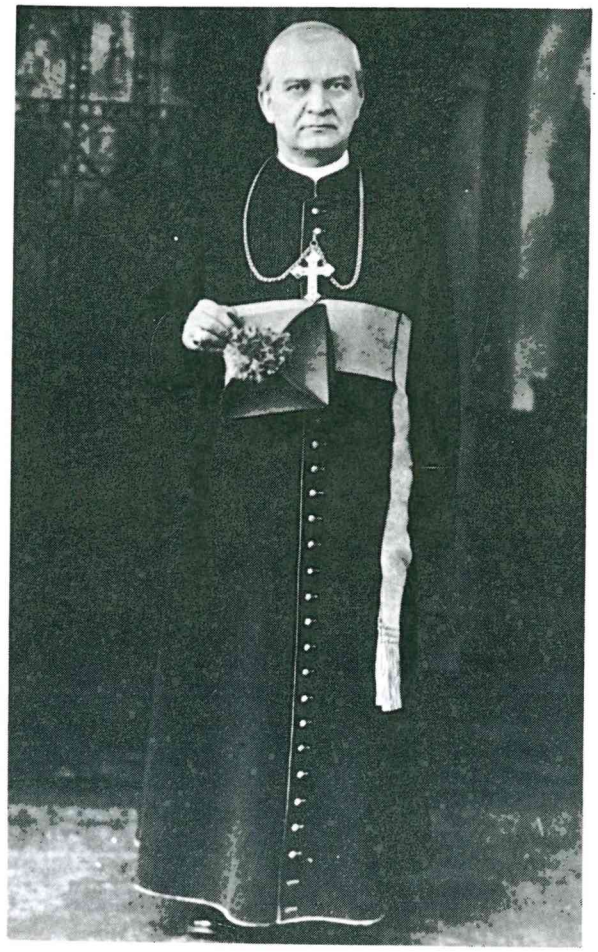
Under difficult, war-time conditions, Bishop George made four pastoral visitations which had not taken place in parts of the diocese for more than ten years. He restored various religious communities of men and women. He took special care of his Seminary, and tried to immunize his priests in every way from the plague of nationalism. If it is true that the reaction to this type of intrepid undertaking was not always what one would have expected, it is likewise true that in the red hot atmosphere of Vilnius, all the virtues of the Shepherd were put to the test.

November 1, 1921 the Servant of God wrote to the Apostolic Nuncio in Warsaw: "Here in Vilnius it is like a kind of hell, where nationalistic and political passions have led some not only to blindness and hatred, but have made them sink into a form of hysteria and nationalistic madness."

The Diocese of Vilnius was divided in 1925, as required by the Concordat of the Holy See with Poland. It was then that, with uncommon prudence, with noble and sincere humility, he turned to Pope Pius XI in a letter dated June 27, 1925, begging to be relieved of all pastoral care of the diocese.

Pius XI, formerly Nuncio to Poland, and fully aware of the delicate situation in Vilnius, acceded to the wish of Bishop Matulaitis in a document dated July 14th of the same year.

George Matulaitis—Bishop of Vilnius.



Gates of the bishop's residence of Vilnius.

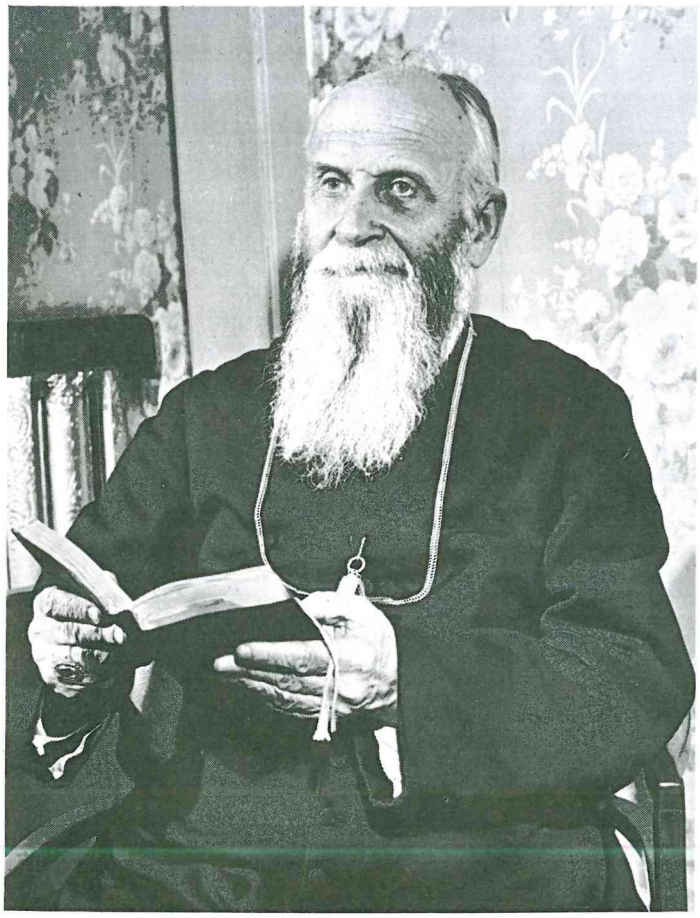
What can you do, Brother? The cross, adorned as it sometimes is with flowers, looks attractive, of course, but only in pictures. The real cross, the cross of life, is always heavy and weighs one down.

I do not know what I would have done in similar circumstances. When I heard from a reliable priest friend for the first time that I was considered an atheist by the Warsaw Consistory, that I would not even get my approbation, I was very hurt; I was really so sick that I walked about in a daze for two weeks. But it turned out well. I took a deep look at myself—my life, my words and my actions. I began to accept such accusations with equanimity, and became so accustomed to them that later even more serious faultfinding and suspicions hardly made an impression.

Perhaps God has heavier crosses in store also for you, and this is only an introduction to them to condition you. Only keep in mind that all things turn out well for those who love God.

From a letter to Fr. Francis Būčys, 1912

Archbishop George Matulaitis.



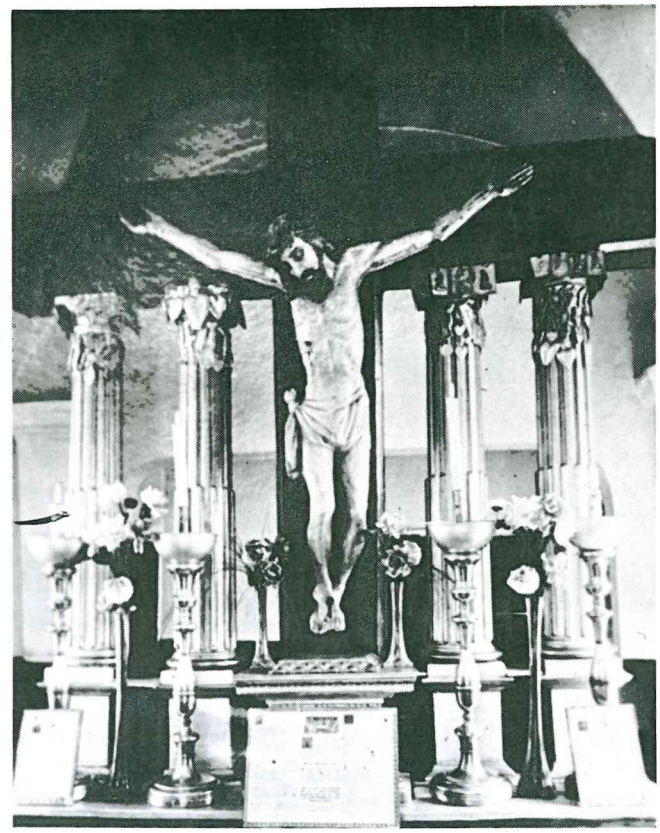
Bishop Francis Būčys.

The cross looks good only in pictures,
decorated with flowers;
the true cross,
the cross of life
is always heavy, depressing.

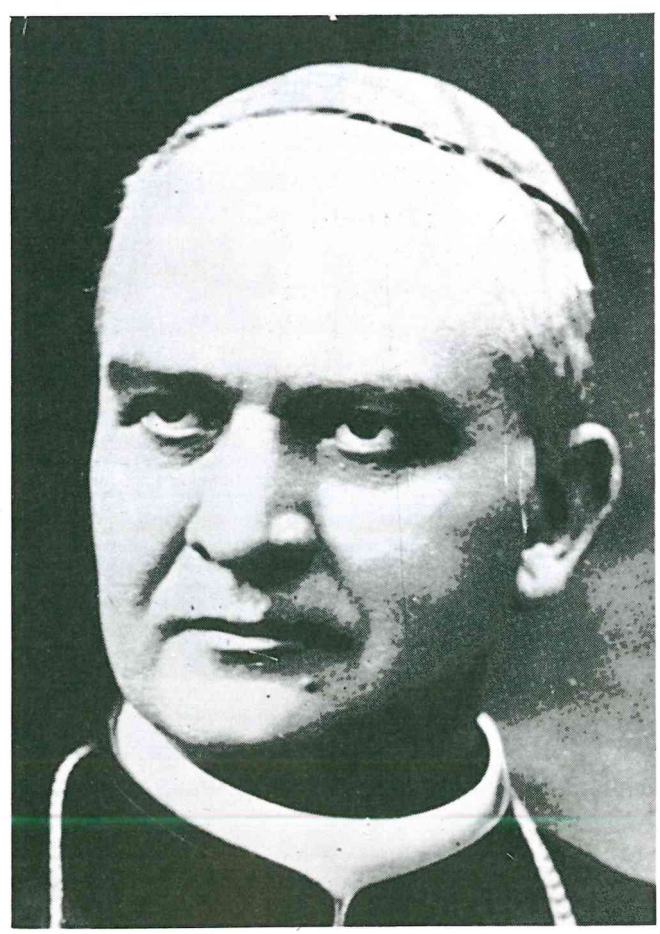
Praise and thanks be
to our Lord Jesus,
who teaches us to carry every cross...
How many times,
hindered with various frustrations,
I let my arms fall;
I was unable to move forward,
as though someone had cut my legs from under me.
You've always strenghthened me, Lord.
When I was shrouded in darkness,
You always showed me Your son's, Jesus Christ's,
example, like the brightest of stars.

What can I, poor man, give You in return for this, O God, for all You have done for me and given to me?
I will take Your Son's cross, which You have
graciously put upon my shoulders,
and I will carry it.

Diary—1913



The miraculous cross in the Marian church of St. Gertrude in Kaunas. It was here that Archbishop Matulaitis was visiting when he became ill on the 21st of January, 1927.



A heart, burning with love of God and neighbor,
is worthier than the loftiest science.
It is important, therefore,
to keep your soul pure and undefiled.
But just as it is difficult
to remain clean while sloshing through mud,
so is it hard not to stain your soul
and corrupt your character
while mingling with all types of people,
listening to all kinds of talk
and observing all sorts of conduct.

In the meantime do not be too disturbed
about the future and do not give in to fear and doubts.
If man were to depend only on his own strength to do
everything, he would have an excuse
for becoming desperate; because he is weak.
But God is our help and strength.
With His aid we can do all things.

A good religious must not seek a life of peace,
but of work and dedication
to God and humanity.

From a letter to M. Rūškytė, 1910

The Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of B.V.M. in Marijampolė, Lithuania, founded by Archbishop George Matulaitis.

Druja, where George Matulaitis, while Bishop of Vilnius, founded the Bielorussian Eucharistic Sisters.

IN AMERICA

We should be concerned
with the vast reaches of Siberia and Russia,
where so many souls falter without direction.
America, which has such a busy way of life,
is a place
where it is easy to forget the matters
of the soul and all other countries...

Diary—1911

Right after my arrival in Chicago I began to work.
I directed a ten day retreat
for the Sisters of St. Casimir.
God blessed me and the fruits of my work were good.
I also preached several sermons and heard the whole
Community's confessions a few times.
Besides, I corrected, completed and coordinated their
Constitution according to Canon Law and the
requirements of the Church.

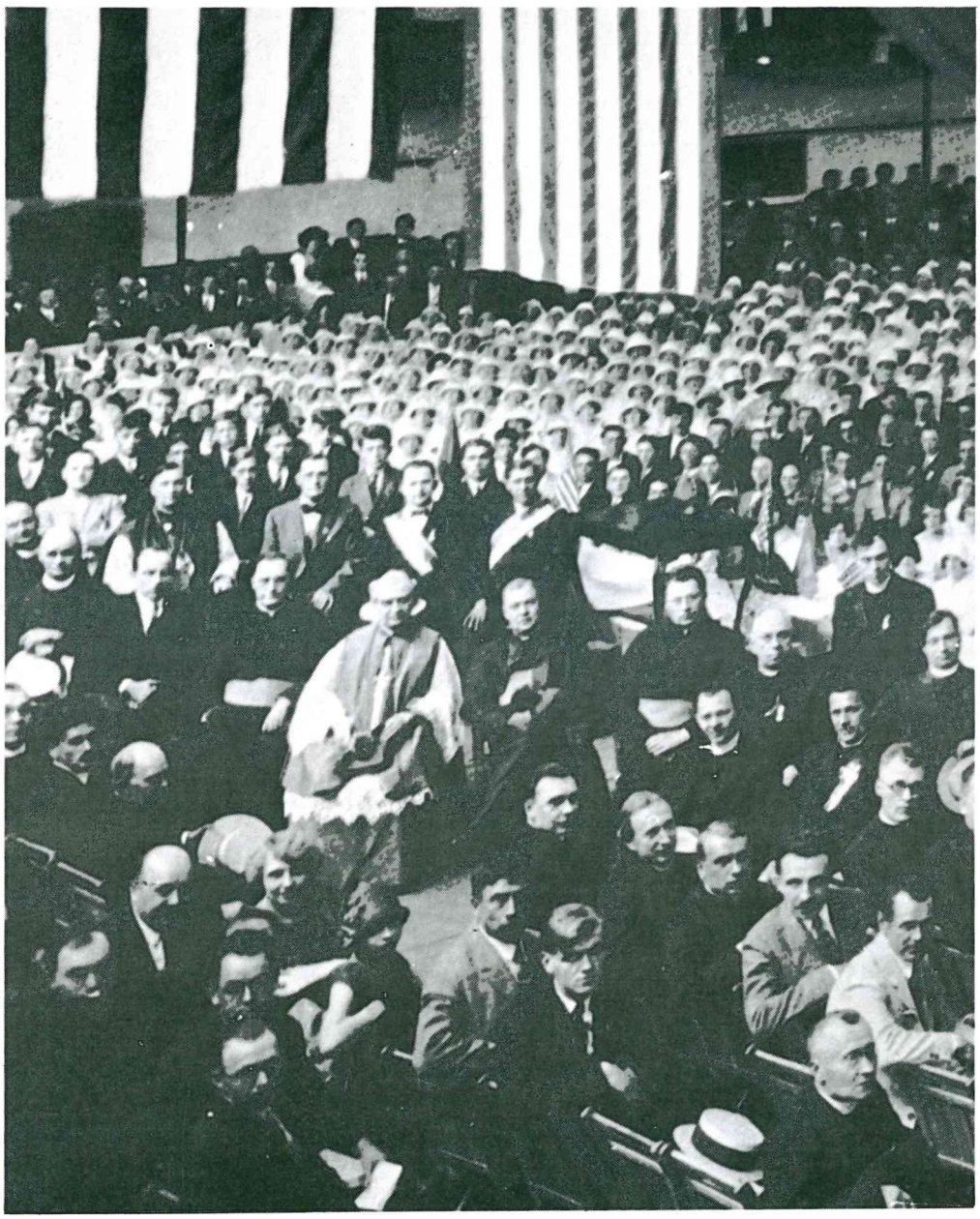
In three parishes I read lectures on social questions.
In Brooklyn I preached two sermons in church
and gave a lecture in the parish hall;
the lecture was quite stormy,
because the socialists kept badgering me.
But it all ended harmlessly enough.
I am of the conviction now, however,
that such lectures do not produce much good.
A specially prepared mission would be better for the
people.

From a letter to Fr. Francis Būčys, 1913

Archbishop George Matulaitis, April 16, 1926, being met at the railroad station in Chicago, Illinois.

Archbishop George Matulaitis at a meeting. Sitting from left to right: Father A. Milukas, Consul P. Daužvardis, Father J. Kaulakis, Father J. Šeštokas, and Father P. Būčys.

Archbishop G. Matulaitis being received at Our Lady of Vilna parish, Chicago, Illinois, 1926.



Archbishop George Matulaitis at the Eucharistic Congress in Chicago in 1926, attending a reception organized by Lithuanians.

HIS LAST DAYS

After Bishop Matulaitis resigned from his bishopric of Vilnius, Pope Pius XI honored him by naming him titular Archbishop of Adulia and appointing him Apostolic Visitator for Lithuania.

Since the introduction of christianity in Lithuania, Lithuanian catholics never had their own ecclesiastical province. After World War I there was an urgent need to establish such a province with its own hierarchy. The Apostolic Visitator prepared its project, and in February of 1926 set out for Rome with it. On April 4 Pius XI proclaimed the creation of a Lithuanian Ecclesiastical Province—the Metropolitan See in Kaunas with four suffragan dioceses.

In the summer of 1926, Matulaitis visited America. After returning to Lithuania, he worked hard preparing a project for a concordat with the Holy See, renewing Lithuania's relations with the Vatican. He completed the project and sent it out on January 21, 1927. That evening he became ill and was taken to the hospital. He died after an appendicitis operation on the 27th of January. His last words at the hour of his death were: array and sacrifice yourselves.

Archbishop George Matulaitis on his deathbed.

Archbishop George Matulaitis waked in St. Gertrude's church in Kaunas.

May our hearts burn with one desire: to dedicate our life to God and the Church, to become used up and consumed in toil and battle for the Church without hoping for anything in this world, without seeking or expecting any personal gain! May we have that great courage which fears no obstacles created by the world and its powers, which does not become fainthearted but leads us boldly into action and battle for the Church wherever necessity urges most, that is, wherever the civil authority persecutes the Church, hampers the religious life and activities of the Church, its societies and institutions! May we fear only this one thing: to die without having suffered or toiled or gained anything for the Church, the salvation of souls and God's glory! May our thoughts and desires ever have this goal: to bring Christ and His spirit everywhere, to everyone, into everything, to glorify the name of the Catholic Church everywhere.

Diary—1910

If I may ask, grant, O Lord, that in your Church I may be like that common dirt-scouring ragmop which, when worn out, is tossed into a dark and filthy corner somewhere. May I be used and worn out in the same way as long as some tiny corner in your Church is cleaned, as long as your House is a little tidier and brighter. Afterwards, let me, too, be thrown aside like that soiled and worn out cleaning rag.

Diary—1911

The Lord God has granted me a special grace. I have come to understand that from no source other than the Holy Father's various writings, addresses, letters, and works approved by him, can we come to know what the Church needs most, with what maladies mankind is afflicted, what remedies are prescribed, what errors and unhealthy opinions should be avoided, what truths are to be stressed, explained and inculcated among men. Formerly I used to examine only the encyclicals and would hardly read the ordinary letters of the Holy Father.

O how favored we are to have an Infallible Teacher! How illuminating for me were the Holy Father's rulings and writings against the Modernists and Sillonits! Man sometimes does not feel himself absorbing opinions which are not wholly tenable, especially when such opinions are propagated under seemingly Catholic auspices. In such circumstances, because one is not completely informed about the issue, one can easily be off guard. What a good thing it is that the Holy Father warns, teaches and indicates to us where the perils lie!

Diary—1913

O Lord, during this time you permitted me many crosses and granted me particular graces. May you be a thousand times blessed for them!

I especially give thanks to you, O Lord, for the extraordinary favor you bestowed on me one day during holy Mass as the organist chanted the Gloria. Holy, marvelous tremors went through me and seized me; my eyes seemed to darken; my body became rigid and seemed to be powerless; my soul was filled with an ineffable delight; an inexpressible sweetness seemed to pervade my being through and through.

O Lord, how sweet you are! Who could express it? If you deigned so to console and comfort an unworthy sinner, how much more of your true servants, your saints? O Lord, reject me not, have mercy on me, permit me to be numbered among your servants!

Diary—1914

The funeral procession on January 29, 1927, with Lithuanian bishops and other religious dignitaries.

St. Gertrude's Marian Fathers' church, where Matulaitis was waked.

Lithuanian government dignitaries in the funeral procession: Pres. Antanas Smetona, Augustine Valdemaras (center), and former Pres. Alexander Stulginskis.

A bronze memorial on Matulaitis' sarcophagus in the Marijampolė church. The body was moved from the Kaunas Cathedral in 1934.

The end of the questioning of witnesses in Matulaitis' beatification process in Rome. Cardinal Ugo Poletti signs the documents.

Cardinal S. Wyszynski signs the documents ending the process in Warsaw.

Members of the beatification process in Chicago. Seated left to right: Fr. Provincial J. Dambrauskas, Msgr. E. Smaza, Bishop A. Abramowicz, Msgr. D. Mozeris, and Fr. V. Mikolaitis. Standing: Fr. F. Skrodenis, Fr. J. Kuzinskas, Fr. J. Rolek, Fr. F. Kelpšas, and Fr. A. Nockūnas.

Excerpts from the homily delivered by His Eminence, John Cardinal Cody, Archbishop of Chicago, Sunday, January 23, 1977, at the concelebrated Mass on the occasion of the 50th commemoration of the death of Archbishop George Matulaitis at the church of the Immaculate Conception, Brighton Park.

It is the unanimous opinion of the witnesses interviewed during the informative process for the beatification of the Servant of God, that he was a man "on fire with the flame of divine love" and the position paper continues: "In the Servant of God there lived the flame of divine love and it enlightened his entire appearance... his entire life was sacrificed for the love of God... he was a living model of the love of God."

The Servant of God "ardently loved Holy Mother Church and considered himself more a citizen of the Church than of his own terrestrial fatherland." (Positio, p. 20). Archbishop George's love for the Church, his adhesion to it, his obedience and love for the Holy Father—are really heroic and amazing, particularly in this day and age when it seems to be almost a "sign of liberation" and "progressiveness" to criticize the Church and its Magisterium.

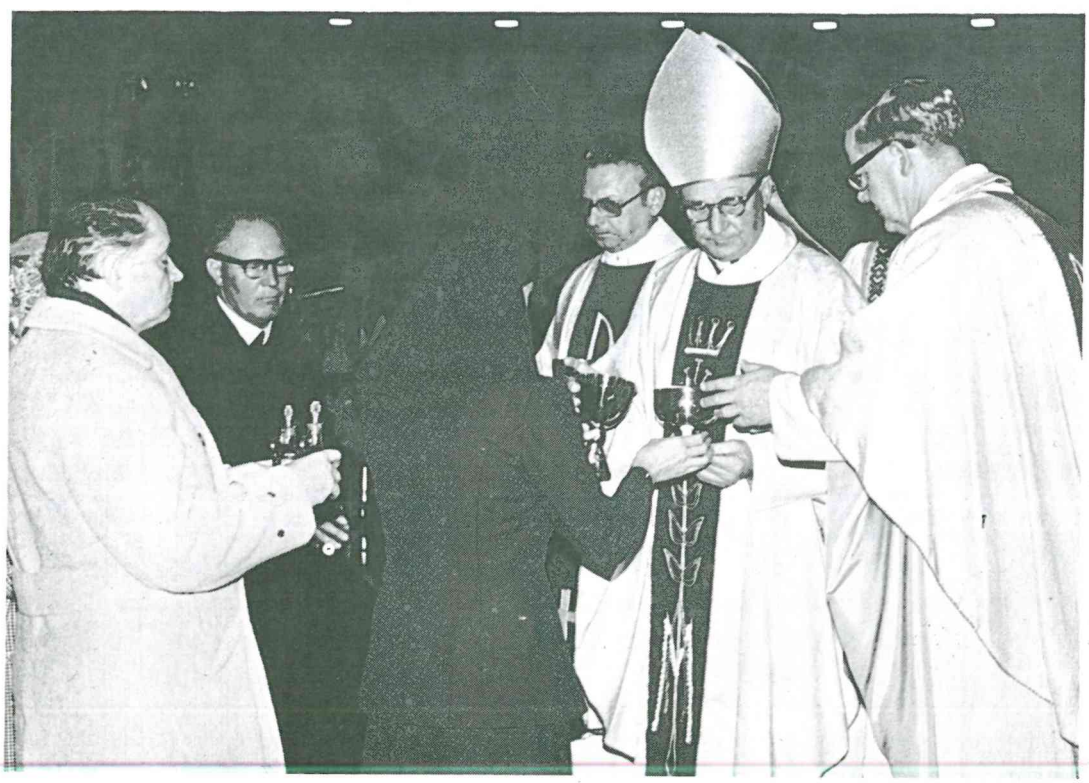
Archbishop George Matulaitis had a special love for the Mother of God, Mary Immaculately Conceived.

Saints are not merely born, they are made by their own action of living an ordinary life in an extraordinary way. Archbishop George was a shining example of this simple truth.

I will do everything possible to continue the process toward the beatification and the eventual elevation to sainthood of Archbishop Matulaitis. It is a feeling of joy and gratitude that brings us to this church together to commemorate this churchman who some day may become a saint.

+ John Cardinal Cody
Archbishop of Chicago

Bishop A. Abramowicz escorted by chaplains to the church.



Presentation of the gifts to the celebrant, Bishop Vincent Brizgys.

Concelebrating priests and people participating at the Mass.

Čiurlionis ensemble sings the newly created Mass by composer A. Mikulskis with accompaniment of zithers.

January 26, 1977, the day before the 50th anniversary of the death of Archbishop Matulaitis, the Superior General with his Councillors and other Marian General Officials residing in Rome participated in the general weekly audience of Pope Paul VI. The Pope speaking in Italian addressed himself to the Marians:

"First we wish to mention the presence here of the General Council of the Marian Clerics Regular under the title of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. You know of course that tomorrow, January 27, is the 50th anniversary of the death of Archbishop Matulaitis-Matulewicz of great fame and sanctity, to whom this religious family owes its foundation—that is, he was its Renovator and Superior General. Always keep in mind this great spiritual personality. We hope that we shall be able to honor him not only in paradise, but here on earth as well, of course if you help with your prayers and assistance. We too are proud of this Archbishop.

Therefore, we greet you, who are here representing your Congregation, your entire religious family, particularly those in certain countries who have greater need of divine assistance. To all we impart our special benediction."

Father Joseph Dambrauskas, MIC, Vice-Postulator in United States, and the former Superior General Father Joseph Sielski, MIC, in conference with the Holy Father Paul VI.

THE PATH TO BEATIFICATION AND CANONIZATION

The Church has established a very definite procedure whereby a person who has lived an outstandingly holy life will be beatified and canonized. Beyond popular conviction and desire, there are certain requirements which make up this process and is called the 'Cause.' This is complicated, time-consuming, and has several very important stages:

1. **FAME OF SANCTITY.** Following the death of a person who has lived an exemplary life, the so-called fame of sanctity may spread in an ever-increasing manner, together with the conviction that by appealing to his intercession, special favors will be granted by God. This acclaim has to be spontaneous and lasting.

2. **SANCTITY OF LIFE.** This is recognized primarily by eyewitnesses who knew the candidate from early life until death; from his writings in which nothing is found contrary to faith and Christian morals; and from his life-work. Further, it must be proved that the candidate has not received undue public veneration as though he had been already canonized.

3. **HEROIC VIRTUES.** When all of the former have been proved and established, the next step is the judgment on the candidate's heroic virtues. Here, too, eyewitnesses are needed to testify that his virtues (Theological—faith, hope, charity; Moral—prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance; and for Religious—chastity, poverty, obedience) were constant and pre-

The Provincial of St. Stanislaus Kostka Province in the United States, Richard J. Drabik, MIC, spoke to His Holiness, John Paul II, on the desire of the Marians and their Associates of the United States to have, as quickly as possible, the beatification of their renovator, Archbishop George.

eminent. After proof of this, the Holy See will issue a formal decree that the candidate possessed and practised virtue to a heroic degree. Without this formal declaration, the cause for beatification cannot proceed, even in the case of a martyr for the faith. For Archbishop George this decree was issued by Pope John Paul II on May 11, 1982.

4. **MIRACLES.** After the candidate's death, people report unusual favors granted by God through his intercession. People call them miracles. Since Archbishop George's death in 1927 there are about one thousand publicly reported miracles. There are many which are not publicized, since the recipients prefer to be silent about them and remain quietly grateful to God and the intercessor.

The favors received are not all of the same kind. Some are strictly spiritual, e.g. miracles of graces, conversion or return to faith in God and practise of religion; leaving a sinful and aberrant life. Many have expressed their gratitude for some unnamed spiritual grace they received through the intercession of Archbishop George.

A great number have testified having received miracles of healing of the body from incurable diseases. It must be noted that these testimonials come from various parts of the world: Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Switzerland, the U.S. of America (the most), Canada, Argentina, Australia, Siberia, and even Israel.

5. **THE FACT OF MIRACLES.** The Church, having done everything humanly possible to establish the candidate's worthiness of beatification and canonization, requires that there be some visible sign from heaven

General Postulator Father Joseph Vaišnora, MIC, and present General Superior Father Donald Petraitis, MIC, December 15, 1985, confer with Pope John Paul II concerning the speedy beatification of Venerable Servant of God Archbishop George Matulaitis.

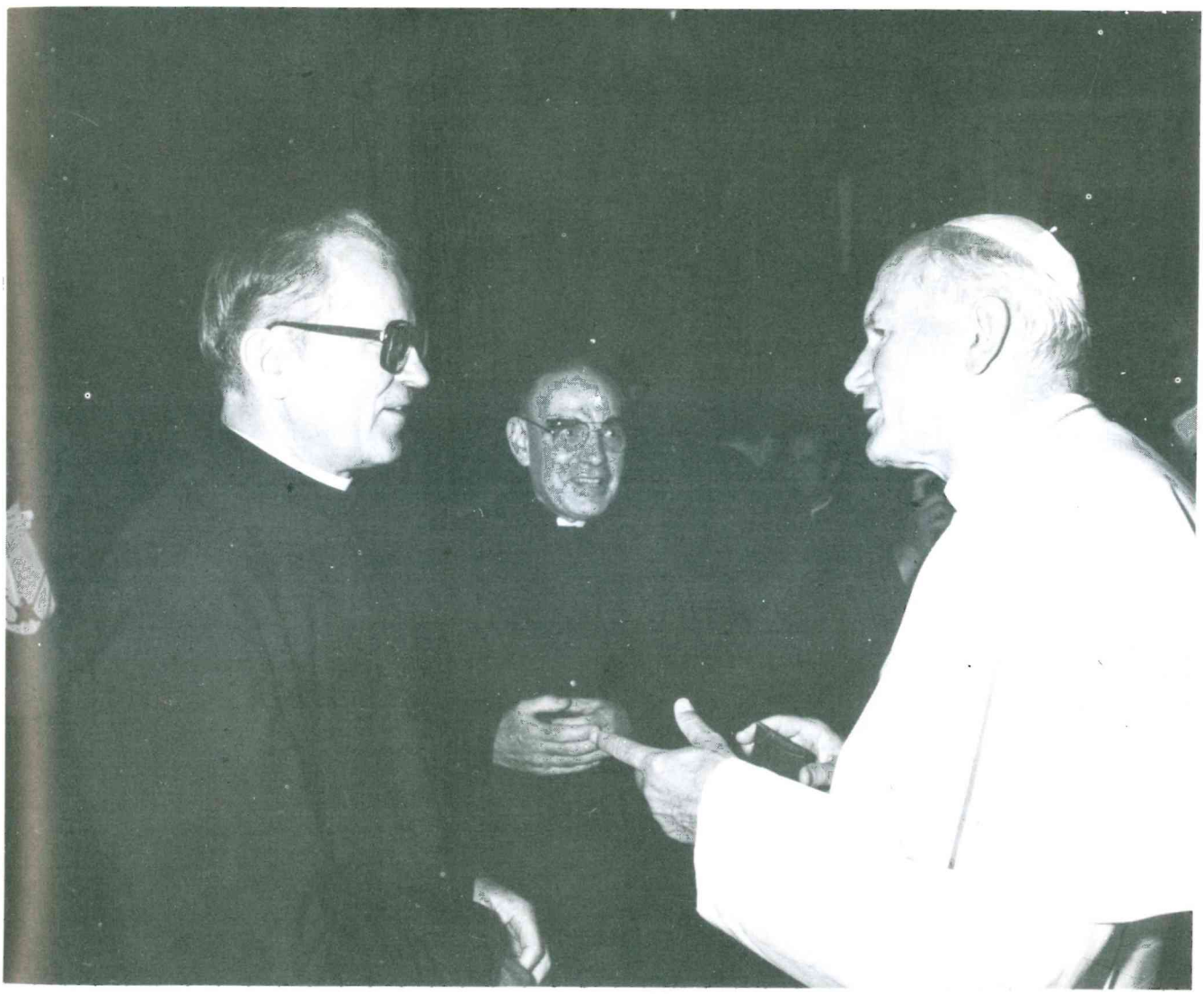
that the person is truly a saint—a miracle. This ordinarily takes the form of a sudden recovery of health through the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God. The first requirement here is the testimony of competent medical specialists. Their testimony is basic to any conclusion that a miracle has taken place.

In the Cause for the beatification of the Servant of God, Archbishop George, one was chosen which was witnessed by several persons. It was a sudden cure from a medically incurable cancer. A specially commissioned group of doctors unanimously asserted on January 15, 1986 that the cure in medical terms was unusual and unexplainable.

After this determination by the doctors, the fact of the miracle is taken up by a Commission of theologians and Cardinals, but this would be a matter of formality. The Pope, then, will issue a decree "On the miracle through the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God, George", who is then titled "Blessed." Then, it remains for the Pope to pick and designate the date for the beatification.

It is expected that the beatification will take place in Rome on June 14, 1987, the date selected to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the Christianization of Lithuania. If the Pope were allowed to travel to Lithuania for that occasion, it could be presumed that the beatification would take place in Vilnius.

After beatification, the Blessed can be canonized and called Saint without any further investigative procedures, but only if new miracles take place through his intercession. The faithful should consider it a duty to pray for this.



The Provincial of St. Casimir Province in the United States, Victor Rimšelis, MIC, and Superior General Felix Grabowski, MIC, confer with His Holines concerning the process of beatification.

THE MISSION OF THE SAINT

From His infinite eternity, God designed for each human being a path for our life on this earth and hereafter. Everyone has a special calling through the Holy Spirit through whom we receive a special mission to fulfill on this earth. This is particularly evident in the lives of saints. After death, that mission continues both on earth and in eternity. However, in eternity, this mission becomes unlimited because of different dimensions. Saints continue their lives for the greater glory of God. The works of the saints do not end at death, but continue both on earth and in heaven. What effect our works have had on earth we will see on the last day of judgement.

Venerable Servant of God, Archbishop George, worked under the motto "For Christ and the Church." That was his mission. He was in love with the church. He renewed the Congregation of the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary; founded the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary; founded the Congregation of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, which was the largest congregation of sisters in Lithuania before the Soviet occupation; founded the Servants of the Holy Eucharist, an order of sisters for Byelorussians in Poland. He revised and renewed the constitutions for the Sisters of St. Casimir in Lithuania and here in the States according to the Canon Law of 1917. Again, he revised and renewed the constitutions of the Benedictine Sisters and the Sisters of St. Catherine in Lithuania.

This shows that his work begun on this earth is being continued through these religious priests and nuns, and now in heaven he continues to assist all of us who implore his intercession.

General Chapter of the Marian Fathers gathered in Rome 1970 for the renewal of their Constitutions according to Vatican II.

A NEW COMMUNITY FOR A NEW ERA

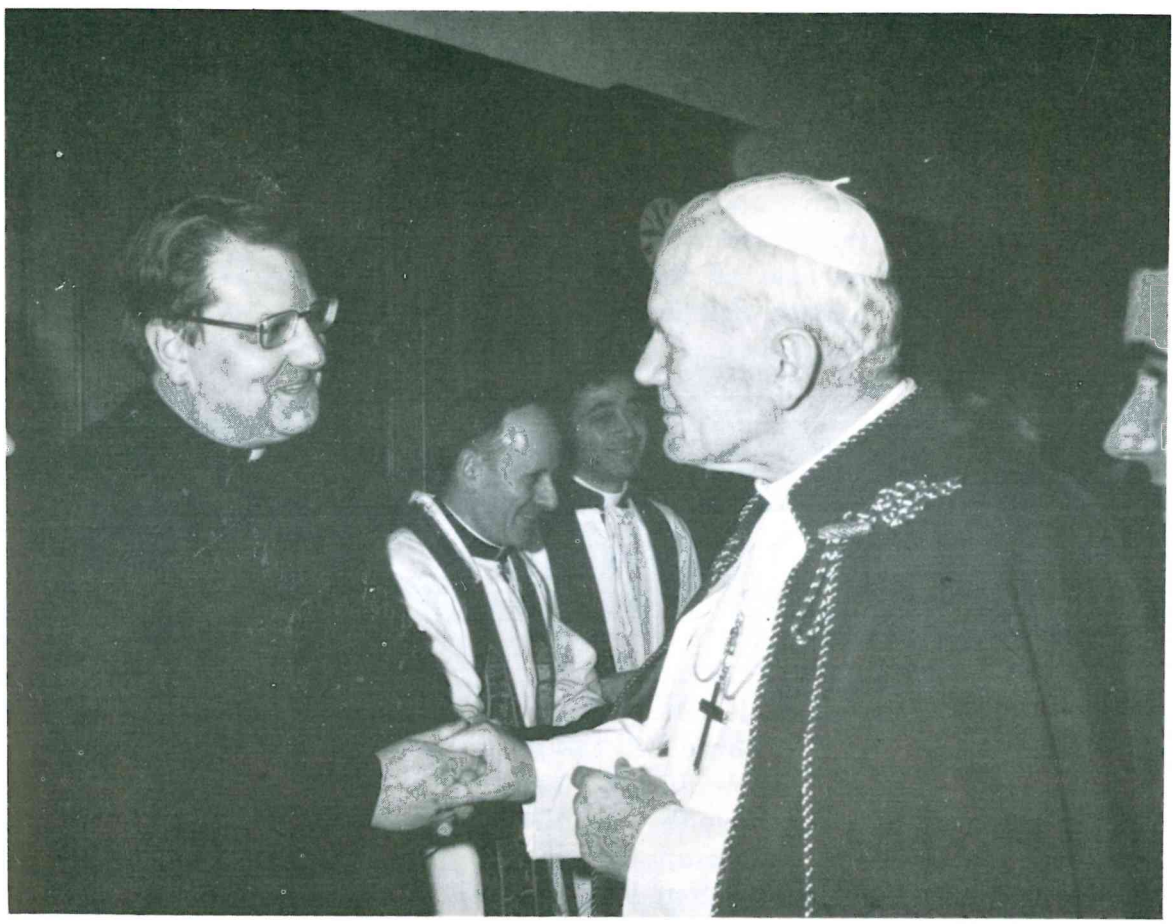
The Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary was the first religious community for women founded by Father George Matulaitis in Lithuania. It was approved by the Church on the feast of St. Teresa of Avila, October 15, 1918. In December of that year Matulaitis became bishop of Vilnius, but he remained in close touch with the fledgling community and helped it through its first difficult years. He had drawn up its constitution, given it a Marian title and directed its apostolate toward the service of the poor. His dream was that this community would help meet the needs of the Church and its people in Lithuania, just recovering from a long period of political and religious oppression.

The new community grew quickly and within twenty years it had over 200 professed sisters working in missions all over the country. Their apostolate included care for orphans, for the aged and the infirm, as well as nursing, teaching, the apostolate of the press and work with Catholic organizations and societies. In 1940 the Iron Curtain descended upon Lithuania and the

The sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary engaged at their apostolic work.

Soviet government abolished all religious communities and Catholic institutions. However, during the short period of independence, the groundwork had already been laid for the strong religious resistance movement that has kept the faith alive in the country despite intense religious persecution.

Providentially, the sisters in Lithuania responded to an invitation extended by the Marian Fathers in the United States to come and work there. In 1936 five sisters were sent across the Atlantic to found a mission. within three years it was cut off from the mother community by the war and by the political situation, but it survived. Little by little their numbers grew and the sisters in America were directed by divine Providence toward similar fields of work as had been undertaken in Lithuania. Without any particular planning on their part, they simply tried to meet the needs of the people among whom they lived in the spirit of their Founder. Soon they had homes for the elderly, day nurseries for children, summer camps for youth, a printing press. They were doing catechetical and parish work and also helping Catholic organizations. During their fifty years in the United States, they have founded six different missions, two of them in Canada, each with its own characteristic apostolate. Despite their small number they continue to be active in many fields, developing their community apostolate and also individual ministries. They have become a bilingual and bicultural community trying to ''think and feel'' with the Church of today and its many needs.



Father Donald Petraitis, MIC., Superior General, in audience with the Holy Father discussing the beatification of the Venerable Servant of God Archbishop George.

PRAYER
for the *Beatification and Canonization of the Servant of God,* ARCHBISHOP GEORGE

O Most holy and indivisible Trinity, Who in life makest Thy abode in the hearts of those who serve Thee faithfully, we humbly beseech Thee that Thy servant, Archbishop GEORGE, who, with the help of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, has served Thy Church with apostolic zeal, through her intercession be crowned soon with the aureole of the saints. Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory be...

Cum Approbatione Ecclesiastica

PRAYER
to obtain a favor

Lord Jesus Christ, you teach us that if two or three will ask for something in your name, it will be granted them by your heavenly Father. Encouraged by this promise, we turn to you in all confidence that, through the intercession of your faithful Venerable Servant Archbishop George, you would restore to health those whom we recommend to your mercy and especially for... *(here mention the name of the person you wish to pray for)* who places all hope in you.

In you, O Lord, we have placed our trust; may we not be put to shame now and throughout eternity! Amen.

NIHIL OBSTAT: Amatus Petrus Frutaz, Subsecret. S. C. R. *pro Causis Sanctorum.* Romae, 23.III.1968.

IMPRIMATUR: + Hector Cunial, *Vicesgerens.*

E. Vic. Urbis, 4.VII.1968.